

VZCZCXRO2848
OO RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHDK #0149 0191334
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 191334Z JAN 07
FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7360
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS DAKAR 000149

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL/AE AND INR/AA
PARIS FOR POL - D'ELIA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [SG](#)

SUBJECT: INTRIGUES TO POSTPONE ELECTIONS

REF: A. DAKAR 0129

[¶](#)B. 06 DAKAR 2979

SUMMARY

[¶](#)1. (SBU) On January 18, the Minister of Information announced plans to postpone legislative elections in response to a January 12 ruling by the Council of State, Senegal's highest administrative body. The Council voided President Wade's December decree allotting National Assembly seats (Ref B) on the grounds that it disregarded demographic criteria in defining electoral constituencies. Critics suspect Wade provoked the Council decision and made election postponement more saleable to the public by intentionally violating the law. The ruling Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) is in turmoil; the country's socio-economic situation is tense; and Wade may wish to focus on reelection rather than devoting energy to the even tougher task of maintaining his parliamentary majority. Wade's plan for a new, largely appointed Senate may be designed to appease the PDS faithful, but it will give him or his successor at least one friendly legislative body. END SUMMARY.

TAKE IT AND RUN

[¶](#)2. (SBU) On January 12, Interior Minister Ousmane Ngom and Presidential spokesman Amadou Sall, both lawyers, announced within a few hours of the Council of State's decision that legislative elections would be postponed in order to have time to correct the violations censured by the Council. Responding, the opposition argued that the Government lacks legal authority to postpone elections, and that the Constitution and law permit correction of redistricting violations even as the organization of elections proceeds. On January 18, following the weekly Council of Ministers meeting, Minister of Information Bacar Dia announced that the legislative elections would take place on June 3, subject to approval by the courts.

AN ORCHESTRATED RULING

[¶](#)3. (SBU) The opposition and some civil society critics accuse Wade of committing two violations of the law. They say he blatantly ignored demographic criteria laid out in the Electoral Code when attributing seats to administrative districts, and that he signed the decree before signing into law the bill on which it is based. As an attorney surrounded by other attorneys, cynics argue, Wade had to have known he was transgressing, but they believe he did so purposefully to trap the opposition into a legal challenge that would freeze the redistribution of National Assembly seats and provide a plausible pretext for postponing elections.

POLITICAL SURVIVAL

[¶](#)4. (SBU) By coupling legislative and presidential elections, Wade had thought his coattails would enable his ruling party to retain its parliamentary majority. 2006 has been a rough year for him, though, with growing social and economic tensions, the ongoing

challenge of ex-Prime Minister Idrissa Seck, the dissatisfaction or departure of other young leaders such as ex-Environment Minister and influential Mouride Modou Diagne Fada, and Prime Minister Macky Sall's inability to resolve internal ruling party rivalries over the allotment of Assembly candidacies. Wade by many accounts feared further dissension in his own ranks, and the possibility that his own supporters would simply stay home on election day in a fit of pique.

COMMENT

¶5. (SBU) It is unclear whether the opposition and Wade's civil society critics will get much popular or legal support in pressing Wade to maintain the February 25 date for legislative elections. Creating a new 100-seat Senate to which President Wade or his successor would appoint 65 members is presumably intended to appease PDS members and guarantee some control over the legislature should the President be forced into cohabitation. END COMMENT.

JACOBS